

Message Text

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BYMO. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER CASTS DOUBT ON NECESSITY OF NEXT
YEAR S GENERAL ELECTION

UNCERTAINTY CONTINUE TO CLOUD NEXT YEAR S GENERAL ELECTIONS HERE
WITH THE ZAMBIAN DAIL MAIL TODAY CARRYING AN IN-DEPTH FEATURE
ARTICLE ON ITS EDITORIAL PAGE ANALYZING THE COUNTRY S POLITICAL
VOTING HISTORY SINCE INDEPENDENCE 13 YEARS AGO.

GIVEN ZAMBIA S PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, THE LENGTHY REPORT, SIGNED BY THE PAPER S
"SPECIAL POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT," CALLS INTO QUESTION BOTH THE
PRACTICALITY AND NECESSITY OF HOLDING THE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR
SOMETIME NEXT YEAR IN THE FACE OF APPARENT APATHY BY ZAMBIAN
VOTERS IN RECENT YEARS.

THE WRITER NOTES THAT SINCE 1964, THE PERCENTAGE POLL AT
ELECTIONS HAS DROPPED BY APPROXIMATELY 52.92 PER CENT.

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE ARTICLE IN THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED
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PAPER WHICH NORMALLY REFLECTS GOVERNMENT THINKING:

THE STORY OF THE DECLINING VOTE IN ZAMBIA UNDER A DEMOCRACY WHOSE
CORNERSTONE IS 'PARTICIPATION' IS PUZZLING TO MANY PEOPLE AND
CAUSING SERIOUS ANXIETY AS WE ARE APPROACHING ELECTION YEAR
1978. AN UNPRECEDENTED ELECTION FEVER ALREADY GRIPS THE LAND.

AT THE HEIGHT OF NATIONAL EUPHORIA IN 1964 THE PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED VOTERS WHO FLOCKED TO THE POLLS ... WERE 94 PERCENT. DESPITE THE INCREASE IN THE VOTING POPULATION AND THE LOWERING OF THE VOTING AGE QUALIFICATION FROM 21 TO 18 THE DECREASE IN INTEREST IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS CONTINUED ON THE DOWNWARD, RECORDING 82.4 PERCENT IN 1968, 43.8 PER CENT IN 1970 S COUNTRY-WIDE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS.

IN THE FIRST GENERAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS UNDER THE ONE PARTY PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY CONSTITUTION IN DECEMBER 1973, THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS WHO CARED TO GO TO THE POLLS WAS NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 39.8 PER CENT.

THIS APATHY HIT A NEW LOW AND THE QUESTION NOW IS WILL THIS DOWNWARD TREND CONTINUE IN THE 1978 ELECTIONS AND, IF SO, WHAT COULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES TO THE NATION? CAN PEOPLE TIRE SO QUICKLY OF DEMOCRACY?

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT OUR SOCIETY IS UNDERGOING A PERIOD OF UNREST AND THE REAL CAUSE ARE ELUSIVE ...REPORTS FROM SOME PROVINCES OF DARK CORNER MEETINGS AND STRANGE GOINGS-ON ... RUMOURS ABOUT POLITICAL DARK HORSES INTENT ON CHALLENGING DR. KAUNDA FOR THE PRESIDENCY NEXT YEAR. IT HAS EVEN BEEN STRONGLY SAID THAT A GOOD SECTION OF OUR VOTING POPULATION INTENDS TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS OF NEXT YEAR.

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THIS PERIOD IS REMINISCENT OF THE YEARS 1968 AND 1969 DURING WHICH THE PARTY NEARLY DISINTEGRATED AND WAS ONLY SAVED BY THE USE OF THE EMERGENCY POWERS BY PRESIDENT KAUNDA, WHO DISSOLVED THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, SUSPENDED THE FOLLOWING YEAR S PARTY ELECTIONS AND TOOK OTHER MEASURES TO PUT THE PARTY ON ITS PROPER FOOTING.

WHILE THE PROBLEM DURING THE LATE 1960 S WERE MAINLY CONCERNED WITH THE PARTY AND THE INTERNECINE BICKERINGS AND JOSTLING FOR POSITIONS WITHIN ITS STRUCTURE, THE DIFFICULTIES GIVING RISE TO THE PRESENT CONFUSION SEEM DIFFICULT TO PINPOINT.

NO NATION ON THE CONTINENT HAS SUFFERED SO MUCH FROM THE EFFECTS OF DECISIONS MADE BY OUTSIDE CIRCUMSTANCES THAN ZAMBIA HAS SINCE 1965 AND THE DECLARATION OF UDI BY IAN SMITH IN THE REBEL COLONY OF RHODESIA.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION HAS SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF REDUCED IMPORTS, OIL PRICES STILL CONTINUE TO RISE WHILE THE VITAL COPPER PRICES HAVE REMAINED AT A LOW LEVEL. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERE SHORTAGES OF SOME ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES WHILE SPARE PARTS AND LACK OF ESSENTIAL MATERIALS HAVE IMPEDED INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT, LEADING TO

REDUCED PRODUCTIVITY.

DESPITE ALL THIS, ZAMBIA ... IS FARTHER AHEAD THAN MOST IN THE
PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES, RURAL RECONSTRUCTION AND IN THE
DRIVE TO BRING THE PEOPLE AS DIRECTLY AND SWIFTLY AS POSSIBLE INTO
THE MAIN STREAM OF MODERN DEVELOPMENT.

IF THERE ARE ANY FAULTS, THESE MUST LIE WITH THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES
AND NOT WITH GOVERNMENT PLANNING OR LACK OF DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP.
IT IS IN THIS FAILURE ON THE PART OF THE MASSES TO UTILIZE TO THE
MAXIMUM THE PLANS AND SERVICES OFFERED BY GOVERNMENT THAT LIES
THE SOFT UNDERBELLY OF THE ZAMBIAN REVOLUTION.
JHE HAS WATCHED OUR APPETITES FOR THINGS FOREIGN INCREASE IN PROPORTI
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TO THE DECLINE IN DEMAND FOR OUR DOMESTIC PRODUCE. PRESIDENT
KAUNDA HAS STARTED TO WONDER WHETHER THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES
LEADERS TODAY REALLY REPRESENT THE PEOPLE THEY CLAIM TO REPRESENT.
HE HAS WATCHED IN DISMAY A GROWING TENDENCY ON THE PART OF THE
LEADER-CLASS TOWARDS DEMONSTRATIVE CONSUMPTION.

THE PROBLEMS ARE
STILL WITH US AND IF ANY
ELECTION IS TO MAKE SENSE AT ALL, IT MUST CONCENTRATE ITSELF ON
THE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS OR THE ELECTIONS WILL BE A
MEANINGLESS DIVERSION OF THE ENERGIES OF THE PEOPLE INTO USELESS
PERSONAL POWER-FIGHTS.

FOR ALMOST 18 MONTHS NOW SINCE JANUARY 28, 1976, ZAMBIA HAS LIVED
UNDER A FULL STATE OF EMERGENCY WHICH, IN ANY CASE HAS BEEN IN
OPERATION SINCE SMITH DECLARED UDI IN 1965, AND FOR THE PAST TWO
MONTHS SINCE MAY 18, 1977 THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN PUT ON A TOTAL
WAR FOOTING.

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THESE TWO MOVES ARE THE EXTREME WHICH THE PRESIDENT HAS EVER
SIMULTANEOUSLY TAKEN SINCE INDEPENDENCE, A MOVE WHICH HAS RAISED
SERIOUS QUESTIONS IN THE MINDS OF MANY PEOPLE AS TO WHETHER, LET
ALONE THE BOYCOTT THREATS, IT IS WISE OR DESIRABLE UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES TO CONTINUE PLANNING FOR AN ELECTION NEXT YEAR,
MORE SO SINCE THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN US AND THE
SOUTH IS NOT LIKELY TO SIMPLY GO AWAY BY THIS TIME COME 1978.

BY THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR, HOWEVER, THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH
HAS DETERIORATED AS SMITH BEGAN TO FEEL THE FULL IMPACT OF THE
FREEDOM FIGHTERS WAR THAT HE SO OFTEN IN THE PAST TRIED TO
LAUGH AWAY.

IN BOTH THE INVOCATION OF A FULL EMERGENCY AND THE TAKING OF
MILITARY PRECAUTIONS BY PUTTING THE COUNTRY ON A TOTAL WAR
FOOTING, EVENTS HAVE PROVED DR. KAUNDA RIGHT AND SHOWED THAT
THESE MEASURES WERE NOT MERE STUNTS TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION
OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. ACTUAL FIGHTING HAS TAKEN PLACE AND
MORE COULD HAVE HAPPENED AND WOULD HAPPEN, WERE IT NOT FOR OUR
STATE OF PREPAREDNESS.

UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEREFORE, MANY SERIOUS-MINDED PEOPLE...
ARE ASKING WHETHER IT IS DESIRABLE THAT THE COUNTRY SHOULD GO
TO A GENERAL ELECTION.

THEIR WORRY IS REINFORCED BY THE PRESENT STATE OF EXCELLENT
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ALREADY IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC WITH REGARDS TO A POSSIBLE ELECTION
NEXT YEAR AND THEY WONDER IF AN ELECTION WOULD NOT ONLY ROUSE
PASSIONS TO A DEGREE WHICH WOULD GIVE THE ENEMY AN OPPORTUNITY
TO ACCELERATE ACTIVITIES TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE ENTIRE
COUNTRY.

WE HAVE SEEN THIS HAPPEN BEFORE IN THIS COUNTRY TO AN EXTENT THAT
THE PRESIDENT HAD TO SUSPEND THE UNIP CONSTITUTION, DISOLVE THE
CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND ASSUME FULL POWERS. IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN
AND THIS TIME ON A MUCH BIGGER AND DANGEROUS SCALE.

TWICE IN THIS CENTURY, BRITAIN WHICH IS A MODEL OF DEMOCRACY, HAS
HAD TO FOREGO THE PRIVILEGE OF THE QUINQUENNIAL LAWS OF HER
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS DURING THE PERIODS WHEN SHE HAS BEEN AS
WE NOW ARE, AT WAR.

IT WAS REALIZED THAT A GENRAL ELECTION WHILST NOT IMPOSSIBLE
WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHAT WOULD BE THE ISSUE BEFORE THE ELECTORATE IN YEARS OF WAR
EXCEPT WHETHER THAT WAR SHOULD BE CONTINUED OR DISCONTINUED.
HOWEVER, THERE WAS A GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THIS ISSUE, LIKE THERE
IS IN ZAMBIA AT THE MOMENT VIS-A-VIS RHODESIA, BOTH IN PARLIMENT
AND IN THE COUNTRY.

THE CONSITITUION OF ZAMBIA, LIKEWISE, HAS PROVISIONS FOR THIS
STATE OF AFFAIRS. WHILE ALLOWING THAT PARLIAMENT UNLESS SOONER
RESOLVED, SHALL CONTINUE FOR FIVE YEARS AN EXCEPTION IS MADE
FOR WHEN THE REPUBLIC IS AT WAR. UNDER THE WAR CONDITIONS AT
THE MOMENT EXISTING THE CONSTITUTION CLEARLY STATES THAT PARLIAMENT
MAY FROM TIME TO TIME EXTEND THE PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS FRO NOT
MORE THAN 12 MONTHS AT A TIME PROVIDED THAT THE LIFE OF PARLIAMENT
SHALL NOT BE SO EXTENDED FOR MORE THAN FIVE ADDITIONAL YEARS.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMINING THIS CONSTITUTIONAL POSSIBILITY
WILL HINGE ON HOW MUCH WE IN ZAMBIA PLACE NATIONAL SURVIVAL ABOVE
PERSONAL FREEDOMS. IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE ... FOR US TO MOUNT
A SUCCESSFUL ELECTION NEXT YEAR. THAT CAN BE DONE BUT AT WHAT
COST TO THZMUNITY OF THE COUNTRY DURING A TIME OF WAR?

THE SITUATION REGARDING SOUTHERN AFRICA IS NOW FIRMLY IN THE
HANDS OF WORLD OPION WHICH IS ON OUR SIDE. LET THE NATION GIVE
THE PRESIDENT TIME NOW TO CLEAN THE DOMESTIC STABLES, WHICH ARE
LITTERED WITH SHORTAGES OF ESSENTIAL, INEFFICIENCY IN PARASTATALS,
CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES, A SOARING COST OF LIVING AND A
RUNAWAY INFLATION.

THIS HE CANNOT DO UNDER THE SHADOW OF A WAG-TIME ELECTION.
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